



Maine Farmers Learn to Manage Food Production Risk with GAP

With more and more companies requiring Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) compliance, staying up to date on all the regulations can be a challenge for farmers like Brandon Roope, a potato and soy bean producer from Presque Isle, Maine.

Roope wholesales potatoes to McCain foods, one of the largest frozen food producers in the world, and when McCain started requiring GAP compliance for all the 118 farming operations in the area, Roope looked to the University of Maine (UMaine) Cooperative Extension for help.

Fortunately, Steve Johnson, with UMaine Extension, had received a grant from the Northeast Center for Risk Management Education for his project, "Managing Food Production Risk with GAP," to help keep farmers up-to-date on staying GAP compliant.

Said Roope, "For an individual to put a program together, it would have been cumbersome and daunting at the very least. Steve sat down with McCain's and with growers and took all the information and made, for lack of a better word, a 'recipe book.' Now I can take and fill out the information and get certification to meet McCain's requirements. Without Steve's work, I don't know how we would have gotten where we are today with this GAP certification."

Through materials developed by the UMaine Cooperative Extension Potato Program and supplied via their web page, 100% of the potato growers producing for McCain foods are currently GAP compliant. This represents a dollar value of \$48,000,000 paid directly to potato growers. The potato processing plant, by using documentation developed by UMaine Cooperative Extension, is also GAP compliant, representing a dollar value of \$13,400,000 paid directly as wages.

Roope estimated that for a group of farmers to hire outside help to get them GAP compliant would have cost anywhere from \$50-100 thousand dollars just to get the documentation together, and that doesn't even take into account the personal hours of work he and the other farmers would have had to put into the project. "Steve looks at the federal regulations and updates the paper work and we can download it from the computer and have a fully updated work book for the coming year. So it's invaluable that way. I'd have to look through a range of regulations, and it would be costly for my own time. I'd probably spend 10 hours a year, and times that by 100 other growers, and there's a value right there. That's a thousand hours...just to put the paper work together."

This is just the latest in a long line of help from UMaine Cooperative Extension that Roope is grateful for. "I've farmed all these years and if it wasn't for Cooperative Extension, not only in GAP but in other areas, I wouldn't have been successful at it."

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EXTENSION RISK MANAGEMENT EDUCATION

“Helping America’s farmers and ranchers manage risk.”

The Extension Risk Management Education program provides training to help producers learn new strategies to manage complex and growing agricultural risks. Extension Risk Management Education accomplishes this by encouraging and funding innovative programs across the country, and helping programs focus on accomplishing tangible results.

Projects are producer-focused, results-based and encourage public-private partnerships. Funded projects must identify targeted results that will help producers manage risk and then describe how the project will measure those results.

Commitment to funding results, providing transparent accountability, and encouraging collaboration allow you to view the accomplishments of all funded projects online at: www.ExtensionRME.org

Section 524(a)(3) of the Agricultural Risk Protection Act of 2000 authorized the Partnerships for Risk Management Education and provided \$5 million dollars annually to be administered by USDA-NIFA. Extension Risk Management Education is delivered through four regional centers that provide grant funding and leadership within their regions.

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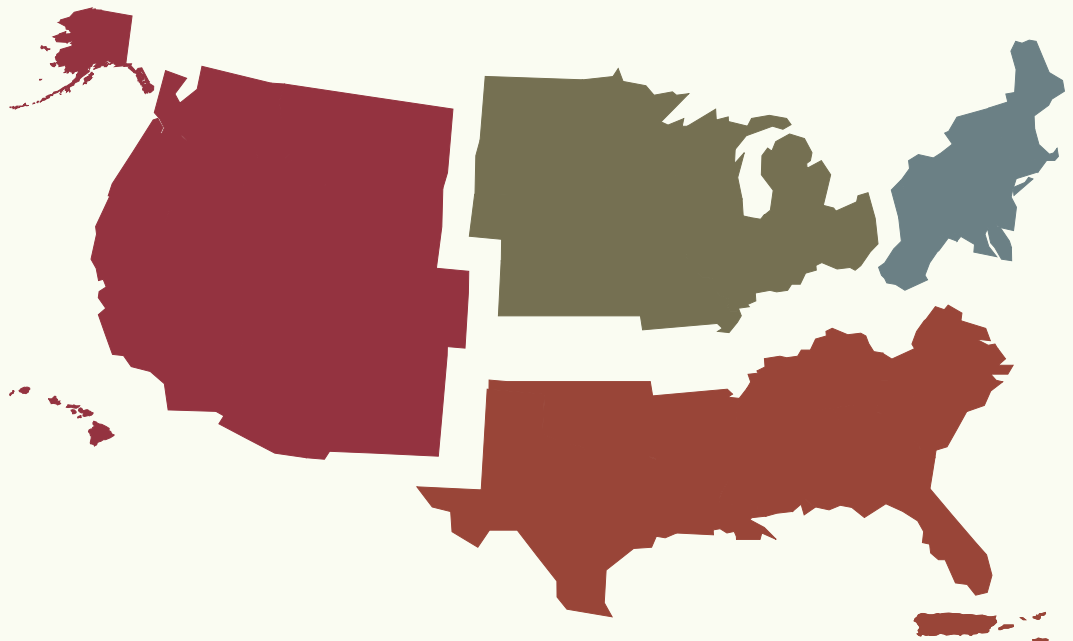
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